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SUBJECT: SADDAM HUSSEIN; CUBA AND CHINA; ISRAEL; MERKEL; CRIMES  
AGAINST HUMANITY; 12/28/06

## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Key international stories today include the upcoming execution of Saddam Hussein; Cuba looking to the 'Chinese model;' the US Department of State criticizing Israel's plans to establish a new settlement in the West Bank; a new declassification of USG documents; Angela Merkel taking over the presidency of the G8 and the EU; and Argentine Federal Judge Norberto Oyarbide's ruling to consider the barbarities of the rightwing terrorist organization Triple A as crimes against humanity and its connection with the 1994 attack against the AMIA Jewish community center.

All local papers report that the FBI was due to join the investigation into the murder of Nora Dalmasso in Rio Cuarto, Cordoba, highlighting that samples of semen will be taken to the US Embassy in Buenos Aires for DNA testing, and that Washington said that the FBI would charge no fee for the tests aimed at identifying the killer.

## 2. OPINION PIECES

- "A milestone"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," comments (12/28) "The life sentence against Saddam is certainly a milestone, as the US has haughtily voiced, but a milestone within the series of mistakes that Washington continues to make in Iraq.

"Saddam's barbarian style is not under debate... We in the region have had clear examples of the same kind of dictators - Saddam was a mixture of Pinochet, Videla and Stroessner, who were staunch allies of the US when in power. It could be said that Iraqi justice made the decision, although it is right to doubt the independent nature of such power.

"We should recall that (Saddam's) life sentence, which has now been confirmed, was announced two days before legislative elections in the US, which were crucial for George Bush. Hussein's death was presented as a symbol of justice administration. The sign was not enough to twist the will of exhausted voters, but will certainly have a frightening effect on Iraq and the Islamic world. The beast will turn from tyrant into martyr, another milestone in the swamp."

- "Cuba looks to China"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" carries an opinion piece by Alberto Benegas Lynch junior, writer, stating (12/28) "... The group rooted in power in Cuba is discussing whether it is advisable or not to follow the 'Chinese model.'

"... Opinions on how China's history will end are controversial in view of prevailing tensions and limitations on basic freedoms like freedom of speech: however, it is interesting to emphasize Lao-Tse's tradition dating back to six hundred years BC.

"In an essay on the importance of civil freedoms in China, the founder of Taoism advised political leaders that 'whenever taxes are too high, there is hunger; when the government interferes too much, the people are disheartened. We should trust people and leave them alone.'

"... The whole socialist and state-driven approach tramples on individual freedoms through the maniacal regulation of legal activities.

"... Unfortunately, for the time being, Cuba does not follow the steps of countries like Ireland, but instead looks to China as an example, but, of course, in that case, Castro II together with his followers and henchmen would be jobless as well as the group of bloodsuckers, despicable pseudo-intellectuals and all those who benefit from unlimited powers."

- "The US criticizes the Israeli plan to establish new settlements in the West Bank"

Leading "Clarín" report (12/28) "The US criticized Israel's plans to establish a new settlement in the West Bank. Yesterday, the US Department of State pointed out that this plan is a violation of Israel's commitments to support peace negotiations promoted by the US, the UN, Russia and the EU, which are known as the 'road map.'

"Gonzalo R. Gallegos, spokesman of the US Department of State, said 'The US is asking Israel to abide by its 'road map' commitments.' 'Israel should avoid taking steps that could be seen as expressions of decisions taken in fact before the outcome of future negotiations.'"

- "Historical documents are declassified"

Business-financial, center-right "InfoBae" (12/28) "Millions of papers from 25-year-old documents will be declassified on December 131. New information is expected to be released about cases related to US intervention in Latin America.

"In this way, the documents expected to be made public are related to the 'Iran-Contra scandal,' which threatened the stability of the then US President Ronald Reagan; the 'dirty war in Mexico,' following the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre; and 'Cuba's participation in Central America."

"Information will be made public about the way in which former US President James Carter handled the 1979 downfall of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, paving the way for ten years of power by the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, whose main representative Daniel Ortega will return to office as president in January."

- "Moscow, a challenge in Merkel's future"

Luisa Corradini, on special assignment for daily-of-record "La Nación," writes (12/28) "On January 1, when Germany takes over the rotating presidencies of the G8 and EU, Angela Merkel will learn that she will have to make superhuman efforts coupled with little room to operate. The conservative FM will have to take initiatives related to climate, energy (a reason for friction with Russia) and education. But, above all, she knows that she will have to meet the expectations of 487 millions Europeans who believe that she will rescue the block from the stagnation in which it remains since May 2005...

"... First of all, Merkel will tackle the thorny issue of energy security. Germany will present the EU the basics of a strategy that will cement a European energy market focused on renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, transparency and price security. However, when Europeans talk about energy, they make special reference to Russia. The issue has become the focus of tensions between the Kremlin and the rest of Europe, including Moscow's former satellite republics. Merkel is determined to underscore the

currently eroded respect for human rights, the murder of opponents, and mainly the use of energy as a political weapon since Vladimir Putin took office.

"Among other claims, Poland and other EU countries want Merkel to put pressure on Putin to make him ratify the European Energy Charter, thus giving foreign companies access to Russian pipelines in order to send gas and oil to Europe. So far, the Kremlin has refused to adhere. Both the EU and Putin know that the war for pipelines will be the next point of confrontation between Russia and Europe."

### 13. EDITORIALS

- "What is a crime against humanity"

An editorial in daily-of-record "La Nacion" reads (12/28) "Federal Judge Norberto Oyarbide's ruling to consider the crimes committed by the organization Triple A... crimes against humanity (which means no statute of limitation) sheds some light into some of our gloomy history by demonstrating that State terrorism started before the March 1976 military coup.

"... However, it is regretful that no judge has defined so far the manifold crimes carried out by the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) and Montoneros as crimes against humanity.

"... When the Supreme Court of Justice did not authorize the extradition of ETA terrorist Lariz Iriondo (on the basis that terrorist actions carried out without State intervention should not be deemed crimes against humanity), it set the precedent that serious crimes like those committed against the Israeli Embassy or the AMIA headquarters would not be considered crimes against humanity unless the intervention of some State agent is proved."

- "An Arbitrary Adjudication"

Liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald" editorializes (12/28) "Federal Judge Norberto Oyarbide's ruling to define the barbarities of the rightwing terrorist organization Triple A as crimes against humanity can be viewed both positively and negatively - positively as an admission of shared civilian responsibility for state terrorism but also negatively as a flagrant case of double standards. The Kirchner administration has been so one-sided in blaming the military for all the evils of the 1976-83 junta dictatorship while turning a blind eye to both their terrorist opponents and civilian allies that it is almost refreshing to see

not only somebody else being blamed for once but even fellow-Peronists... Yet the double standards continue because the condemnation applies only to the rightwing Triple A and not to their leftist Montonero opponents - indeed so great has been government reluctance to condemn any political violence other than junta atrocities as terrorism... that it refuses to define the 1992 and 1994 attacks on Jewish targets as crimes against humanity.

"... Since Argentine courts under this government have issued warrants for Iranian ex-officials who were in power at the time of the AMIA Jewish community center blast in 1994, why not call the AMIA attack state terrorism?"

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